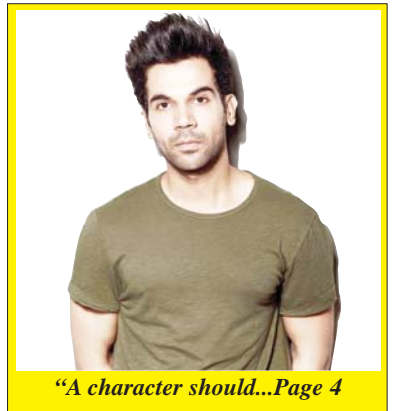




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JUNK FOODS Time to JUNK THEM

Baldev Singh Chib

Junk foods include foods like Burgers, Dosas, Sandwiches, Samosas, Cutlets, Patties, Pizzas, Hotdogs, Momos, Noodles, Pakoras, Potato chips, Bhujia, Kulcha, Chole Bhature, Pav Bhaji, French Fries, Cheese Chili, Fried Chicken, Ice-cream, sugar sweetened beverages like soda, sugary meals etc.

These are also called fast foods which are easy to make and easy to consume. Junk foods are also known as discretionary foods which mean that they are not needed to meet our nutrient requirements. In the United Kingdom, the junk foods are described as HFSS (high fat, sugar and salt) foods. These are typically highly processed foods, meaning several steps are involved in making the food, with a focus on making them tasty and thus easy to over eat. Unfortunately, junk foods provide lots of calories and energy, but little of vital nutrients our bodies need to grow and be healthy, like proteins, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Since the nutritional value of junk food is lost in the process of its making, synthetic vitamins and minerals are added to compensate for the loss of natural vitamins and minerals, but they are not good and incapable of soaking the free radicals to prevent diseases. Chemical additives like artificial coloring are very harmful to the body and are the causes of many nasty things.

Junk foods have a lot of sugar, salt and fat contents to make these addictive and enhance the taste. Potato chips are probably one of the most harmful junk foods. They are made out of potatoes which are high in fat, then deep fried in oil and highly laden with salt. Another most popular snack item is Bhujia. One will be shocked to know that one tablespoon of Bhujia contains 78 calories and one bowl 1000 calories. All types of deep fried foods like puris, parathas, kulche, bhature etc. are super harmful for our bodies and have numerous ill effects. These are prepared with all-purpose flour (maida) which has high sugar content in it. It is a fact that puris and parathas have been a staple food in many parts of India, but these traditions developed at a time when people were doing strenuous work in fields, or at homes. Studies by the Harvard School of public health showed that people who ate fried foods at least once a week were at a greater risk of developing both type 2 diabetes and heart-diseases. This risk increases as the frequency of fried food consumption rises. Moreover, consuming fried food made out of used and re-heated oil is also a factor in developing high blood pressure and increased triglyceride levels. These increase the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and stroke or all three. In 2019, India had an estimated 77 million diabetics. Between 1990 and 2019, India recorded the biggest increase in diabetes-related deaths from 78,789 such deaths in 1990 to 2,73,089 fatalities in 2019.

The habit of eating junk food is continuously increasing in the younger generation especially in children. Fat and sugar are additives like heroin and cocaine. Over sustained periods of junk food eating, blood circulation and vital oxygen drops due to fat accumulation. Lack of vital oxygen, nutrients and protein particularly can stale brain cells temporarily. High cholesterol due to junk food strains the liver, damaging it finally. Junk food is a major cause of heart diseases due to plaque formation in arteries which demand extra effort to pump blood. Deficient oxygen supply can cause respiratory disorders also. The main problems with it are increasing childhood obesity, which further leads to many health complications in children. High contents of fat, salt and sugar cause a lot of harmful effects like Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension, Heart disease, Dental cavities, Kidney disease, Neurological disorders, Skin Rashes, Cancer, Hypoxia, Asthma, Behavioral problems, etc.

The attracting advertisements are largely responsible for influencing the young and the children to consume junk foods. Multinational companies are attracting the young people and children by attractive and aggressive marketing strategies. The

junk food companies resort to sneaky advertising tactics, which show celebrities promoting junk foods. Cricket, one of the favorite sports, is sponsored by the big fast-food brands. Now, the Central Government has issued guidelines for celebrities and social media influencers, mandating compulsory disclosure of monetary or material benefits of a product or a brand they are promoting through social media platforms. Failing to do so will attract a penalty of up to Rs. 50 Lakh. The guidelines specify that disclosures must be prominently displayed in the endorsement, making them "extremely hard to miss". This is a welcome step the central government has taken but the enforcement has always been poor in our country.

According to the dietary guidelines of Australia and many other countries, the five food groups are: grains and cereals, vegetables and legumes, fruits, dairy and dairy alternatives and meat and meat alternatives. These foods provide us vital nutrients our bodies need to grow and be healthy, like proteins, vitamins, minerals and fiber. Besides, 30 minutes of physical activity is also necessary to remain healthy. The National NCD surveillance Survey 2017-18 report states that 98% of Indians do not consume enough fruits and vegetables and only 59% of adults do enough physical activity. There are many reasons that most of us do not eat enough fruits and vegetables - culturally our diet is grain/pulse based due to historical need to address under-nutrition. The other most important is the affordability issue. The other reasons are that we don't attach sufficient importance to health and eat unhealthy due to taste and/or are simply too lazy. The hindrance to physical activity i.e. morning walk is our environment - air pollution, weather, unusable sidewalks, parking of vehicles on the roads, encroachment of roads and lanes by extending ramps, lack of parks or when available, often unsafe and poorly lit. Socio-cultural barriers are also important, especially for women not being able to perform physical activity - their role being within the household. Therefore, the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment are also the reasons for unhealthy options.

Hence, there is a real need to make Indian food healthier and more suited to our lifestyles for healthier and disease-free life. Homemade food is the best option because it has higher nutritional value, good quality, mental satisfaction etc. It is superior in taste because there is no adulteration, no use of re-heated oil, no artificial coloring, no chemicals (MSG, flavor, color additives and preservatives) Salad, vegetables and fruits should be eaten. Wholesome wheat flour instead of all-purpose flour should be eaten. It is utmost important that millets are added to our daily food. While most of us eat wheat and rice as staple foods, they do not have the nutritive value of millets. Hence, these are not what are called 'nutria-cereals' Some examples of millets are: Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi/Mandua), Little Millet (Kutki), Kodo Millet (Kodo), Barnyard Millet (Sawa/Jhangora), Foxtail Millet (Kangni/ Kakan) and Proso Millet (Cheena). Millets have been staple foods for people in Asia and Africa for over 10,000 years.



Millets have significant amounts of proteins, dietary fiber, vitamin B, and several metal ions which the rice

lacks. It is thus important that millets are added in our daily diet. Even if about 20% of rice and wheat were to be replaced by millets, it would greatly benefit our health.

We can opt for lighter foods like sprouted beans and lentils in our meal. All purpose, wheat flour can be swapped with whole meal flour for making chapatis. The same goes for swapping white rice with brown rice. Oil is an essential part of the Indian kitchen and this ingredient is daily used for cooking food. Rather than using regular sunflower or any other refined oil, we should use Olive oil or mustard (Sarson) oil which have amazing health benefits.

Parents should take care of the eating habits of their children and protect them from junk foods by increasing the awareness about the health problems associated with junk and fast foods. The habit of junk foods can be avoided by strong will power and awareness of the side effects associated with them. School/college canteens should also ensure to keep healthy food in their menu rather than focusing only on junk food. Teachers and Anganwadi workers should also educate children about the harmful effects of junk food on health. Government intervention is also needed to remove the vehicles parked on the road/ lane sides to make them walk-able.



Resisting NEW Transformative IDEAS

Ashok Ogra

From accepting coffee as an everyday drink to invention of printing press, from discovery of X-ray to the launch of cars, to current debate on the potential threat of drones, gene editing and much more - history is littered with new ideas, processes and technologies that sparked resistance before becoming fixtures in everyday life.

Most of us are familiar how the blue jeans fabric conquered pop culture and fortified the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the US. However, in the 17th century, the dye that would put blue on jeans was banned by many European countries.

Reason: the fermenting process yields a putrid stench not unlike that of a decaying body. It took 100 years before the Indigo dye was accepted by Europeans.

Therefore, the current apprehensions about AI (ChatGPT etc) is perhaps expected considering what Elon Musk said: "AI could be one of our biggest existential threats."

Humans often converge around massive technological shifts-around any change, really-with anxieties. Also,

humans are instinctively designed to react to novel things in a way that aims to protect oneself.

The most interesting case of resistance is certainly that of coffee - a product that was opposed for over 300 years, all the way from Asia to Europe. According to some historians, coffee is considered the most controversial product of all time, certainly more controversial than nuclear power.

During the 1650s, British wives bemoaned the fact that coffee-drinking was such an intellectual, effeminate pastime that it had rendered their husbands impotent. They also complained that coffee made men too talkative.

When coffee emerged in Tamilnadu in the late 19th century, there was much opposition from intelligentsia, who thought filter coffee to be more addictive than even beer and arrack. More worrying was coffee's transgression into the habits of womenfolk. A correspondent wrote to Gandhi that the greatest obstacle to the success of the non-cooperation movement in Madras 'is our women who have become addicted to drinking coffee.'

Rewind to ancient Greece: Socrates resisted writing because it was mute, didn't encourage dialogue and debate and would encourage forgetfulness, as memory wouldn't be stimulated anymore.

When printing finally arrived around 1450, the major opposition came from the Church and the Ottomans. The concern expressed by Islamic religious leaders was that allowing the printing of the Koran could introduce variations in the text and, therefore, lead to different interpretations of the religious code.

In the initial decades, the Church exercised full control over the printing of books, and discouraged printing new discoveries that challenged their established viewpoint. For

instance, the Church taught that God was responsible for illness and propagated that God sent disease as a punishment for sin or to cleanse the soul.

Therefore those medical students who tried to make new discoveries were forced to fit them into the older theories, rather than experimenting to explain new discoveries. This meant that medical understanding made very little progress during the 15th and 16th centuries.

However, the period between the 16th and 18th centuries saw a rapid increase in experimental investigations and advanced anatomy.

The initial public skepticism of new technologies was witnessed when new inventions promised huge benefits to society. When Wilhelm Röntgen discovered in 1895 the phenomenon of the X-Ray completely by chance, it promised both hope for medical miracles and, on the other hand, there was fear of loss of privacy.

Imagine, tobacco smoking as a cause of lung cancer was first researched as early as the 1920s but was not widely supported by publications until the 1950s.

Up until the latter half of the 20th century, the prevailing wisdom among gastroenterologists was that ulcers were caused by stress, spicy food, or too much stomach acid. But in the early 1980s, two Australian doctors - Dr. Barry Marshall and Dr. Robin Warren discovered that patients with ulcers were populated with an unknown microorganism, which they named H.Pylori. To gastroenterologists, the concept of a germ causing ulcers was like saying that the Earth is flat. No wonder, initially skepticism greeted their findings. Both the doctors were awarded Nobel Prize in 2005.

When farm tractors were first introduced in the US, some saw little advantage in the new machines over horses. Some even argued that their value could be marginally improved if they could reproduce themselves like horses.

No one foresaw the transformative power that the telephone would become at the dawn of its invention in the 1870s. The majority was confused and amazed, but didn't care about it. Many people, content with the telegraph, even insisted that the telephone was entirely unnecessary and would discourage families from visiting each other's homes. Some wondered if the machines might be used to communicate with the dead.

And when electricity was invented, people had great difficulty adjusting to a new normal that interrupted biological rhythms of life and altered schedules for work and leisure.

Nobody even thought that even promoting the idea of a self-propelling motorcar in the early 20th century would invariably invite ridicule. The eminent German sociologist Werner Sombart complained bitterly of a world in which "one person was permitted to spoil thousands of walkers' enjoyment of nature." Initially, accidents happened because the other users of the street refused to adapt to the changed circumstances brought about by the appearance of the motor car.

The history of the airplane is even more interesting. Quite a lot of 'ooh' and 'aah' greeted the airplane when it made its first appearance in the early 20th century.

Commercial aviation was very slow to catch on with the general public, most of whom were afraid to ride in the new flying machines.

When cinema shows began at the turn of the 20th century, "movies were seen to rapidly intensify the process of demoralization; they drew people out of their homes, tempted them into dark spaces and served them content of low quality and despicable moral standards."

When Vincent Cerf invented the INTERNET in early 1980s, few took notice of it as it sort of crept into our lives slowly. In the case of Tim Lee Berner who formulated WWW code in 1991, the significance of the moment wasn't immediately obvious. His own colleagues paid little attention.

Just forty years ago, bank employees across the country strongly resisted computerization of their operations. However, today, banks in India have witnessed a radical change from 'conventional banking' to 'convenience banking'. Today, they are poised for 'digital banking' at a rapid pace.

In the seminal book 'Innovation & Its Enemies: Why People Resist New Technologies', ex Harvard Professor Calestous Juma argues that society tends to reject new technologies when they substitute for, rather than augment, our humanity.

That explains why not every invention is recognized as a game-changer when it first comes out. Plenty of inventions and technologies throughout history are unappreciated, underestimated, and feared at their debut.

Even as beneficial a product as knitting machines was received with great skepticism when introduced first time - as it was seen threatening the livelihoods of a certain class of workers.

From ancient times when 'the divine was everywhere' to the present where 'AI is omnipotent', one is reminded of Victor Hugo: "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

However, we are now entering the most unknown: 3D printing, AI & machine learning, drones, gene editing etc, with the latter provoking a group of US scientists and activists to call for a global ban on the genetic modification of human embryos, warning the technology could have an irreversible impact on humanity. It has also generated fears of various jobs becoming redundant.

According to one technology writer, "Artificial intelligence will reach human levels by around 2029. Follow that out further to, say, 2045, and we would have multiplied the intelligence - the human biological intelligence of our civilization - a billion-fold."

In simple terms, humans who are limited by slow biological evolution, won't be able to compete and stand to be superseded.

It is this scary scenario that perhaps explains why we humans often resist life-changing transformative technologies because it presents changes, big or small, to our immediate world, a world to which we have worked hard to adjust. Remember, the majority still prefer the familiar. The only weapon we humans have to minimize the AI presence is to 'turn off the system...'